

The Simplest Government Heuristic of All: Citizens Infer that Governing Parties are Pro-European Union

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Abstract

Previous research documents that citizens apply a “coalition heuristic” to infer that governing coalition partners share more similar policies and ideologies than are implied by the statements in their election manifestos. We propose even simpler government-related heuristics citizens can apply to infer party positions on European integration: the current government heuristic that currently governing parties are more pro-Europe than opposition parties, and the long-term opposition heuristic that opposition parties that have never governed are less pro-Europe than opposition parties with previous governing experience. We report theoretical and empirical analyses of survey data from 24 European Union member states, which substantiate that citizens apply these heuristics, which have consequences for citizens’ policy beliefs and their party support. We also find evidence that citizens respond to policy as measured through election manifestos and expert surveys.

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Several recent studies analyze the heuristics citizens use to infer parties' and politicians' ideologies and policy behavior. In the context of parliamentary democracies, Fortunato and Stevenson (2013; see also Fortunato and Adams 2015) show that citizens infer that the partners in coalition governments share more similar ideologies than are implied by the policy tones of their election manifestos, a finding that Adams, Ezrow and Wlezien (2016) extend to the European integration issue. Further, Adams, Bernardi and Wlezien (2020) show that citizens cue off of social welfare policy outputs to update their perceptions of governing parties' Left-Right positions.

We extend this research by arguing for and empirically testing an even simpler heuristic citizens can apply to infer party positions on the increasingly salient issue of European integration: namely, that all else equal – including the policy tones of parties' election manifestos and parties' positions estimated through expert surveys – governing parties are more pro-Europe than opposition parties. We further elaborate this idea into two, related, heuristics: the current government heuristic that currently governing parties are more pro-Europe than opposition parties, and the long-term opposition heuristic that among current opposition parties, those that have never governed are more Eurosceptic than parties with previous governing experience. We present theoretical reasons why we expect citizens to apply these heuristics, and we report empirical analyses of survey data from 24 European Union member states that substantiate that citizens rely heavily on these heuristics, particularly the long-term opposition heuristic. We show that citizens also respond to the policy tones of parties' election manifestos, and that citizens' party placements track those of political experts. We believe that our findings are important because, as we also show, these heuristics influence citizens' policy beliefs and their party support.

Our findings pertain to mass-elite linkages and to parties' election strategies. With re-

spect to strategy, our findings imply that parties that are invited to join the cabinet should weigh the effects of governing on their policy reputations. In particular, long-term opposition parties entering government for the first time should project that their cabinet status may shift their images in a sharply pro-Europe direction. Given the emergence of European integration (and immigration) as an increasingly salient electoral cleavage (Hooghe et al. 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2018), this reputational effect has implications for parties' electoral success.

With respect to mass-elite linkages, our conclusion that citizens respond to the policy tones of parties' election manifestos – independently of their governing status – implies that citizens estimate party policy positions in part from parties' actual policy rhetoric, which reflects positively on their citizens' attentiveness. By contrast, our finding that citizens also infer party positions from their government participation has more problematic implications: in some situations this inference may be valid, in others it may lead citizens astray. In these latter cases, the government-based inferences may be examples of what Dancey and Sheagley (2013) label “heuristics behaving badly.” We discuss these normative issues near the end of the paper.

Government Participation and Voter Heuristics with Respect to European Integration: Theory and Empirics

The political landscape abounds of examples that point towards a pro-Europe attitude of governing parties in European Union member states. By attending European Union summits; by publicly meeting and consulting with European Union representatives; and by incorporating European directives into national legislation, governing parties respond to political and institutional constraints to act responsibly in line with and in support of the European Union. Although counter-examples exist – a recent one being the Italian coalition government with Lega and Five Star Movement harshly confronting the European Union over Italy's national budget (D'Alimonte

2019) – media coverage of these types of visible, highly publicized instances of national governments’ typically harmonious interactions with the European Union are common across European Union member states.

The types of symbolic events described above are in line with systematic empirical studies which conclude that governing parties are, on average, more pro-Europe than opposition parties, based on analyses of party manifestos (e.g., Conti and Memoli 2011), experts’ party placements (e.g., Hobolt and De Vries 2015) and national media discourse (e.g., Statham et al. 2010). Moreover, scholars have theorized and empirically documented an especially sharp positional divide between long-term opposition parties, i.e., those that have never served in government, versus parties with previous governing experience. In this regard, since Taggart’s (1998) seminal work on Euroscepticism as a “touchstone for domestic dissent” that emerging parties advance to challenge established parties, Euroscepticism has been associated with the “politics of opposition”, whereby “opposition to government policy may sometimes be cast in terms of opposition to integration” (Sitter 2001, 24; but see Kriesi 2007 and Vasilopoulou 2011). This pattern pertains to findings that European integration is not easily subsumed by the Left-Right dimension, in that moderate parties tend to be pro-Europe compared to extreme right- and left-wing parties (e.g., Bakker et al. 2015).¹ In this regard, Hobolt and De Vries (2015, 2020; see also van de Wardt et al. 2014) present arguments that “challenger” parties that have never been in government are motivated to promote Eurosceptic policies as a wedge issue that can destabilize the current coalition of governing parties, and that may additionally threaten future governing coalitions.

¹ Note that exceptions exist whereby Euroscepticism is strong in internal factions of mainstream parties – especially center-right parties in e.g., the United Kingdom, France and Poland (Ray 2007) – but also divisive for parties of the left (e.g., Marks and Wilson 2000).

tions' stability. A crucial feature of the authors' argument is that because challenger parties have little prospect of being invited to join future governments – i.e. they exhibit low “coalition potential”, in Sartori's (1976) terms – the destabilizing effects of European issues should not damage the challenger parties themselves, only their competitors. By comparison, opposition parties with previous governing experience may hesitate to adopt Eurosceptic positions, first because such positions may damage their prospects of entering future governing coalitions, second because their previous involvement in EU decision-making processes might render Euroscepticism non-credible to voters (e.g., De Vries and Hobolt 2012). Below we substantiate these arguments by presenting evidence that governing parties are indeed more pro-Europe than opposition parties (on average), and that long-term opposition parties – which Hobolt and De Vries (2015) label “challenger parties” – are more Eurosceptic than opposition parties with previous governing experience.

To the extent that citizens recognize the above patterns, they may use them as heuristics to infer party positions on Europe. Extensive political science research analyzes the use of cues versus policy information (for a review, see Boudreau and MacKenzie 2014). This research builds on the idea of a dual processing model of opinion formation (Chaiken and Trope 1999), which posits that citizens' cognitive capacities are limited, and that in the presence of heterogeneous, fragmented information, some citizens may employ heuristic processing. The claim that “cues are far more influential than information when it comes to political evaluations” (Ciuk and Yost 2016, 329) is supported by a body of public opinion research (Cohen 2003; Popkin 1991; Rahn 1993; Zaller 1992). Although support for this claim is mixed (see Boudreau and MacKenzie 2014), heuristic processing is a much simpler cognitive task than policy information processing, as it concerns the application of simplifying decision rules to a piece of information

(Bullock 2011). In the case of European Union politics, heuristic processing may prompt citizens to infer that a currently governing party is probably more pro-Europe than an opposition party, all else equal, and that a party in long-term opposition is more likely to oppose European integration than an opposition party with previous government experience. Indeed, our government heuristics are easy to apply, given findings that virtually all European citizens can identify which parties are in their national government (Duch et al. 2010). And, these government-based heuristics have parallels in the partisan-based heuristics American citizens use to infer elected officials' positions: namely, in the absence of specific information about an elected representative's positions, citizens infer that these positions match those of the representative's national party (Dancey and Sheagley 2013). Of course such heuristics can prompt either correct or mistaken inferences, depending on the circumstances, a subject we discuss below.

While the above arguments apply to citizens who recognize the generally positive relationship between government participation and pro-Europe policies, even citizens who are unaware of this general pattern may perceive (current and previously) governing parties as more pro-Europe, independently of these parties' actual positions. This is because national government representatives routinely participate in public events such as European Union summits that receive extensive media coverage and that plausibly convey support for European integration. Such events typically feature prominent domestic political figures such as the country's Prime Minister and foreign secretary consulting and negotiating over EU matters with officials from foreign governments, and also meeting with prominent EU representatives such as the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission. Moreover, such summits feature symbolic public actions that plausibly convey support for European integration, such as photographic sessions featuring the heads of all EU member states, national government representatives shak-

ing hands with prominent EU officials, and so on. Of course, government representatives may use these forums to stake out more or less pro-Europe positions (and our empirical analyses below control for exogenous measures of these positions). However, national governments experience strong pressures to present a united, pro-EU front in these forums, and empirical analyses document that national governments typically behave in ways that convey support for European integration. For instance, national governments participating in the Council of the European Union – the primary decision-making body of the European Union, in which national ministers negotiate and adopt legislative proposals – cast dissenting votes less than two per cent of the time between 1990 and 2011 (van de Wardt et al. 2014). And, while the incidence of dissenting votes has increased over the past several years, recent research on government opposition in the Council shows that this is “still a rare event” (Hagemann, Hobolt, and Wrátil 2017: 852).² Moreover from the mass public’s perspective Council deliberations are conducted mostly away from the public scrutiny (Bailer et al. 2014) and might not easily be interpretable by voters as a stance on European integration (Hagemann et al. 2017). Hence we might expect that – controlling for exogenous party position measures – citizens will use governmental status as a shortcut.

² Government opposition can be largely attributed to welfare considerations and clientelistic pressure (Bailer et al. 2014; see also Mühlböck and Tosun 2018) and is more likely to be exercised when governments are under pressure in their national parliaments (Hagemann et al. 2019). In this context, Hagemann and colleagues argue that “governments can use opposition votes in the Council as public signals of their position on EU integration” (2017: 854). In addition, Hagemann et al. (2019) report that (national) parliamentary oversight is important because where parliaments have formal powers to oversee and restrict their government’s positions governments make a larger use of opposing votes and formal policy statements.

The above considerations prompt the following hypotheses:

The current government hypothesis (H1): Controlling for exogenous measures of party positions, citizens perceive currently governing parties as more pro-Europe than opposition parties.

The long-term opposition hypothesis (H2): Controlling for exogenous measures of party positions, citizens perceive parties in long-term opposition as more Eurosceptic than opposition parties with previous governing experience.

We note that while we see theoretical bases for our two hypotheses, we might expect that citizens cue especially strongly off of parties' long-term opposition status, while the distinction between currently governing parties and those with previous cabinet experience is less meaningful. This is because, first, previous research documents that parties' past cabinet participation colors citizens' perceptions of their current Left-Right positions (Fortunato and Stevenson 2013), an effect we might extend to the European integration dimension. Second, Hobolt and De Vries (2020) present powerful arguments and evidence that "challenger" parties that have never governed are fundamentally different from other parties, both in their strategies and their motivations, and we might expect these differences to strongly color citizens' perceptions of challenger parties' policy positions. Our empirical analyses below substantiate that indeed long-term opposition status provides a powerful signal when citizens estimate party positions on Europe.

We note that H1-H2 specify heuristics that apply while controlling for exogenous party position measures. This is because we expect some segments of national electorates to engage in systematic processing when estimating party positions (Chaiken and Tropic 1999), whereby they expend the effort to acquire and process relevant information pertaining to parties' stances towards Eu-

rope, such as information gleaned from the parties' web sites, from media coverage of the policy statements in parties' election manifestos, and from party elites' statements in speeches, interviews, and parliamentary debates. Hence we expect that public perceptions of party positions respond to exogenous measures of these stated positions, independently of the parties' governing status – just as we expect these perceptions to respond to parties' governing status independently of their stated positions. On this basis we proceed.

An empirical basis for the governing party hypotheses

We further substantiate that citizens have a sound basis for applying the current government heuristic and the long-term opposition heuristic by analyzing the statistical association between parties' governing status and two widely-used party position measures. The first is the Euromanifesto Project (EMP) codings of the statements in the manifestos parties published in the run-ups to European parliamentary elections, which are held every five years (Schmitt et al. 2018). The procedure the EMP uses to map parties' positions is as follows: the coders count and code the percentage of each Euromanifesto dedicated to various issue areas, and then the total percentages for 14 pro-EU and 15 anti-EU issues are calculated by subtracting the percentage of anti-EU mentions from the percentage of pro-EU issue mentions. These codings run from –100 (maximum anti-EU score) to +100 (maximum pro-EU score). (Section 1 in the supplementary information memo provides additional information about party Euromanifestos and the EMP coding procedures.) We used these codings to create the variable [*party j 's position – EMP coding (t)*], defined as the EMP coding of the policy tone of party j 's Euromanifesto in the year t of the current European election.

Table 1A displays the means and the standard deviations of the EMP codings of parties' Euromanifestos for the 2014 European Parliamentary (EP) elections (column 1), and for all EMP

codings from the 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014 EP elections (column 2).³ Tables S1 and S2 in the supplementary information memo report the set of parties and countries that we analyze, which encompass every party-year that is covered in both the EMP codings and the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (described below). The table reports computations on parties subdivided according to their governing status, including current governing parties (row 1), i.e., parties that were in the national government at the time of the current EP election; opposition parties with previous governing experience (row 2), i.e., opposition parties that had governed at some point since the country joined the EU; and long-term opposition parties (row 3), i.e. those that (at the time t of the current EP election) had been continuously in opposition.⁴ The computations substantiate an empirical basis for the current government hypothesis and the long-term opposition hypothesis. The computations for 2014 displayed in column 1 of Table 1A show that the mean EMP codings of currently governing parties' Euromanifestos (mean=5.73, SD=6.44) were more pro-Europe than the mean EMP codings for opposition parties with previous governing experience (mean=4.12, SD=11.51), which were in turn more pro-Europe than the mean codings for long-term opposition parties (mean= -3.28, SD=15.41). These differences are statistically significant ($p < .01$). The computations on the Euromanifesto codings over the entire 1999-2014 period dis-

³ We analyze EMP codings from 1999-2014 because, as discussed below, we can compare these data against the Chapel Hill Expert Survey respondents' party placements across this period.

⁴ We used ParlGov database (Döring and Manow 2019) to collect information of governing status. We note that a handful of parties that were never coded as in government in our data set at the time of the EP election participated in their national governments in other periods within the time span covered in our data set. Thus, the one we provide below is a conservative estimate of our government heuristics effects.

play similar patterns (see column 2 in Table 1A).

While the content of parties' Euromanifestos are important indicators of their positions, parties communicate their positions in additional venues including press releases, party elites' speeches and interviews, and parliamentary debates. Moreover, parties' positions are arguably defined in part by their concrete actions, namely their legislative behavior in both the national and European Parliaments. While we lack party position measures based on most of these factors⁵, political experts are free to consider them – along with the parties' manifestos – when estimating party policy positions. Accordingly, Table 1B displays computations for an alternative party position measure based on political experts' party placements, from the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (see Bakker et al. 2015; Polk et al. 2017; Hooghe et al. 2010) in which respondents who were considered experts on the focal country's politics were asked to place each party in the system on a scale running from 1 ("strongly opposed towards European integration") to 7 ("strongly in favor of European integration"). We used these survey responses to compute the mean expert perception of each party j 's position for each CHES survey, a variable we labelled [*party j 's position – CHES experts (t)*]. Then, as in Table 1A above, we subdivided the cases into those of currently governing parties, opposition parties with previous governing experience, and long-term opposition parties at the time t of the current Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES), and we computed the mean position over each set of parties. These computations, reported in Table 1B, substantiate that the CHES experts' mean placements of currently governing parties were more

⁵ But see Klüver and Sagarzazu (2017) for analyses of party press releases, Hix and Noury (2009) for analyses of roll-call votes by members of the European Parliament, and Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) for analyses of party leaders' annual speeches. Note, however, that the Klüver-Sagarzazu and Hobolt-Klemmensen studies are of parties' issue emphases, not positions.

pro-Europe than their placements of opposition parties with previous governing experience, which were in turn more pro-Europe than their placements of long-term opposition parties. These differences are significant ($p < .01$) for analyses based on the 2014 CHES survey (see column 1 in Table 1B), and for analyses across the entire set of CHES surveys administered to date, i.e., those from 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014 (see column 2 in Table 1B). In 2014, for instance, the mean position experts ascribed to currently governing parties was 5.86 on the 1-7 European integration scale ($SD=0.97$), the mean perceived position for opposition parties with previous governing experience was 5.43 ($SD=1.57$), and that for long-term opposition parties was 3.87 ($SD=2.02$).

Table 1 displays an additional pattern that substantiates our earlier speculation that citizens may cue especially strongly off of parties' long-term opposition status. Note that our party position measures imply that the primary positional divide is between long-term opposition parties versus parties with governing experience, as opposed to that between currently versus previously governing parties. Thus while the CHES experts ascribe slightly more pro-Europe positions to currently governing parties than to previously governing parties (the mean party placement difference is about 0.4 units on the 1-7 scale; see Table 1B), experts place both types of governing parties at much more pro-EU positions than long-term opposition "challenger" parties, which the experts place more than 1.5 units away from opposition parties with previous governing experience. The analyses of party Euromanifesto codings, reported in Table 1A, display similar patterns. These computations support Hobolt and De Vries' (2015) argument that "challenger" parties that have never governed use Euroscepticism as a wedge issue against established parties. If citizens recognize these patterns, we might expect them to lean more heavily on the long-term opposition heuristic than on the heuristic that currently governing parties are more pro-

Europe than previously governing parties. The empirical analyses we report below support these expectations.

Table 1. The Relationship between Parties' Governing Status and their Positions on European Integration

1A. Codings of Party Euromanifestos

	2014 EMP Codings (1)	1999-2014 EMP Codings (2)
<i>Currently governing parties</i>	5.73 (6.44)	9.77 (9.12)
<i>Opposition parties with previous governing experience</i>	4.12 (11.51)	6.68 (10.16)
<i>Parties in long-term opposition</i>	-3.28 (15.41)	-4.03 (16.38)
N	124	420

1B. Experts' Party Placements

	2014 CHES Survey (1)	1999-2014 CHES Surveys (2)
<i>Currently governing parties</i>	5.86 (0.97)	5.88 (1.01)
<i>Opposition parties with previous governing experience</i>	5.43 (1.57)	5.48 (1.41)
<i>Parties in long-term opposition</i>	3.87 (2.02)	3.72 (1.84)
N	124	420

Notes. The dependent variable for the analyses in Table 1A is [*Party j's position (t) – EMP codings*], defined as the Euromanifesto Project (EMP) coding of the party's stated position on European integration in the current European Parliament election. These codings are on a scale running from -100 (maximum anti-EU position) to +100 (maximum pro-EU position). The computations reported in column 2 of Table 1A are on EMP codings from the 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014 European Parliament elections. The dependent variable for the analyses in Table 1B is [*Party j's position (t) – CHES experts*], defined as the mean Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES)

respondent party placement on European integration in the year of the current CHES survey on a scale running from 1 (“strongly opposed towards European integration” to 7 (“strongly in favor of European integration”). The computations reported in column 2 of Table 1B are on the CHES surveys from 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014.

In toto, these analyses substantiate that citizens have a sound empirical basis for applying government-related heuristics to infer parties’ positions on European integration, in the absence of more detailed information about a specific party’s current policy position. Our analyses of both Euromanifesto codings and experts’ party placements imply that currently governing parties are on average more pro-Europe than opposition parties, which supports citizens’ applications of the current government heuristic, and that long-term opposition are on average much more Euro-sceptic than opposition parties with previous governing experience, which supports citizens’ application of the long-term opposition party heuristic. Of course the generalization that parties’ governing status is related to their EU policy positions, while valid on average, can prompt mistaken inferences in particular cases that undermine citizens’ perceptual accuracy. We return to this point below.

Empirical Tests of the Governing Parties Hypotheses

We analyze whether citizens infer parties’ positions on European integration based on their current governing status and their previous governing experience, in analyses that control for exogenous party position measures. Our data on citizens’ perceived party positions are from European Election Study (EES) surveys administered near the times of the European Parliament elections of 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014, for the parties from the 24 countries listed in Table S2 in the supplementary information memo (van der Eijk et al. 1999; Schmitt et al. 2009; van Egmond et al. 2013; Schmitt et al. 2015). The EES surveys are administered in all current European Union member states, and ask respondents to place themselves and political parties on an 11-

point scale of support for European unification, where higher values denote preferences for more unification.⁶ Section 2 in the supplementary information memo provides additional details about the EES surveys. Our dependent variable is the party's mean perceived position in the current year, computed over all respondents who provided valid party placements. We label this variable [*Party j's mean perceived position (t)*], and we computed the variable values across all party-year observations in the EES surveys for which we also have EMP- and CHES-based party position measures, 420 observations in all. As reported in Table 2, the mean perceived party position across the parties and years in the EES surveys is 4.91 on the 0-10 scale, and the standard deviation of these mean perceived positions is only 1.23. The modest variation in different parties' mean perceived positions may reflect citizens' unfamiliarity with the European integration issue, which prompts many respondents to place parties near the center of the scale.

⁶ The question wording is as follows: "Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using an 11-point scale. On this scale, 0 means unification 'has already gone too far' and 10 means it 'should be pushed further'. What number on this scale best describes your position?" Respondents are then asked: "And about where would you place the following parties on this scale?" We note that before 2009 a 10-point scale was used running from 1 to 10. Thus, we have rescaled the variable for 1999 and 2004 in line with subsequent election years using the formula $[j's \text{ mean re-scaled perceived position } (t)] = ([j's \text{ original mean perceived position } (t) - 1] \times 10/9)$. To avoid confusion, hereafter we refer to the rescaled EES variable as an 11-point scale variable.

We initially estimate the following basic model, designed to evaluate the current government hypothesis (H1) that citizens perceive currently governing parties as more pro-Europe than opposition parties, when controlling for exogenous measures of party positions:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Party } j\text{'s mean perceived position } (t) = & b_1 + b_2[j\text{'s position} - \text{EMP codings } (t)] \\ & + b_3[j \text{ is currently in government } (t)] \end{aligned} \quad , \quad (1)$$

where the variable $[j\text{'s position} - \text{EMP codings } (t)]$ was defined above, and $[j \text{ is currently in government } (t)]$ is a dummy variable that equals 1 if party j was in the national government at the time t of the current EES survey, and zero otherwise.⁷ If citizens respond to the policy tones of parties' Euromanifestos, i.e., if some citizens engage in systematic processing of substantive information about party positions (Chaiken and Trope 1999), then the coefficient b_2 on the $[j\text{'s position} - \text{EMP codings } (t)]$ variable should be positive and significant, denoting that citizens perceive the party as more pro-Europe as the policy rhetoric in its Euromanifesto becomes more favorable towards European unification (when controlling for its governing status). And, the current government hypothesis (H1) implies that the coefficient b_3 on the $[j \text{ is currently in government } (t)]$ variable will also be positive and significant, denoting that some citizens apply heuristic processing to infer that currently governing parties are more pro-Europe than current opposition parties (the residual category), when controlling for the party's Euromanifesto.

⁷ Note that the EES surveys are administered in the same years when parties published their Euromanifestos (i.e., the years of European Parliamentary elections), so that our measure of the dependent variable, $[Party\ j\text{'s mean perceived position } (t)]$, and the independent variable $[j\text{'s position} - \text{EMP codings } (t)]$ are contemporaneous.

We also estimate the following full model, designed to evaluate both the current government hypothesis (H1) and the long-term opposition hypothesis (H2), that citizens perceive long-term opposition parties as more Eurosceptic than opposition parties with previous governing experience, all else equal. This model additionally controls for whether the party has been in long-term opposition since the country joined the European Union:

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{Party } j\text{'s mean perceived position } (t) = & b_1 + b_2[j\text{'s position} - \text{EMP codings } (t)] \\
& + b_3[j \text{ is currently in government } (t)] \\
& + b_4[j \text{ in long-term opposition } (t)] \quad , \quad (2)
\end{aligned}$$

where $[j \text{ in long-term opposition } (t)]$ is a dummy variable that equals 1 if, at the time t of the current EES survey, party j had been in opposition continuously in our data set. The long-term opposition hypothesis (H2) implies that the coefficient on this variable will be negative and significant, denoting that some citizens engage in heuristic processing to infer that long-term opposition parties are more Eurosceptic than parties in the residual category, i.e., current opposition parties with previous governing experience. We also estimate country and year fixed-effects, to account for possible cross-national and temporal differences in how citizens interpret the EES European integration questions. Table 2 reports descriptive statistics for the variables we analyze.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
<i>Party j's mean perceived position (t)</i>	4.91	1.23	1.22	8.67
<i>Party j's position – EMP codings (t)</i>	4.19	13.62	-64.00	37.98
<i>Party j's position – CHES experts (t)</i>	5.03	1.73	1	7

<i>Party j currently in government (t)</i>	0.34	0.48	0	1
<i>Party j in long-term opposition (t)</i>	0.33	0.47	0	1

Notes. The table reports descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables included in the specifications given by equations 1-4 in the paper. The variable definitions are given in the text.

Table 3 displays our parameter estimates, with standard errors clustered on parties and country and year dummies included. Column 1 reports estimates for the basic model given by equation 1. We estimate that citizens' perceptions respond to parties' manifesto-based policy statements, independently of the party's governing status: the coefficient on the [*j's position – EMP codings (t)*] variable, +0.048 ($p < .01$), denotes that parties' predicted mean perceived positions shift by 0.048 units in a pro-EU direction on the 0-10 EES European integration scale, for each additional unit of manifesto distance based on the EMP codings. This implies that a change from one standard deviation below to one standard deviation above the mean value of this variable (from -9.43 to +17.91 on the EMP coding scale) shifts EES respondents' predicted mean perceived party position by roughly 1.3 units in a pro-EU direction on the 0-10 EES scale, controlling for the party's governing status.

We now consider the government-based effects that interest us. The coefficient on the [*j is currently in government (t)*] variable, +0.45 ($p < .01$), implies that – controlling for the policy tones of parties' Euromanifestos – the mean predicted EES respondent placement of currently governing parties shifts 0.45 units farther towards the pro-Europe end of the 0-10 European unification scale, compared to respondents' mean placements of opposition parties. Since the standard deviation of parties' mean perceived positions is only 1.23 units, this governing party effect is meaningful. Thus our estimate supports the current government hypothesis (H1) that

citizens perceive currently governing parties as more pro-Europe than opposition parties, when controlling for objective measures of party positions.

Column 2 in Table 3 reports estimates for the full model given by equation 2, which is designed to evaluate both the current government hypothesis (H1) and the long-term opposition hypothesis (H2), that long-term opposition parties are perceived as more Eurosceptic than opposition parties with previous governing experience, when controlling for objective party position measures. The coefficient on the [*j is currently in government (t)*] variable is +0.12 ($p > .05$), and no longer statistically significant. The coefficient on the [*j in long-term opposition (t)*] variable, -0.84, is negative and significant ($p < .01$), denoting that compared to opposition parties with previous governing experience (the residual category), EES respondents' predicted mean placements of long-term opposition parties are shifted over eight tenths of one unit towards the anti-Europe endpoint of the 0-10 European unification scale, when controlling for parties' actual policy statements. This supports the long-term opposition hypothesis. Note, moreover, that our estimates imply that citizens lean far more heavily on the long-term opposition heuristic than on the current government heuristic. The stronger cues citizens take from parties' long-term opposition status are consistent with the exogenous party position measures presented earlier in Table 1, which suggested that long-term opposition parties are far more Eurosceptic than other types of parties (on average), while the positional differences between current and previously governing parties are smaller. Our estimates in Table 3 suggest that citizens recognize this pattern, and ascribe much more Eurosceptic positions to long-term opposition parties than are justified by the policy statements in their Euromanifestos.

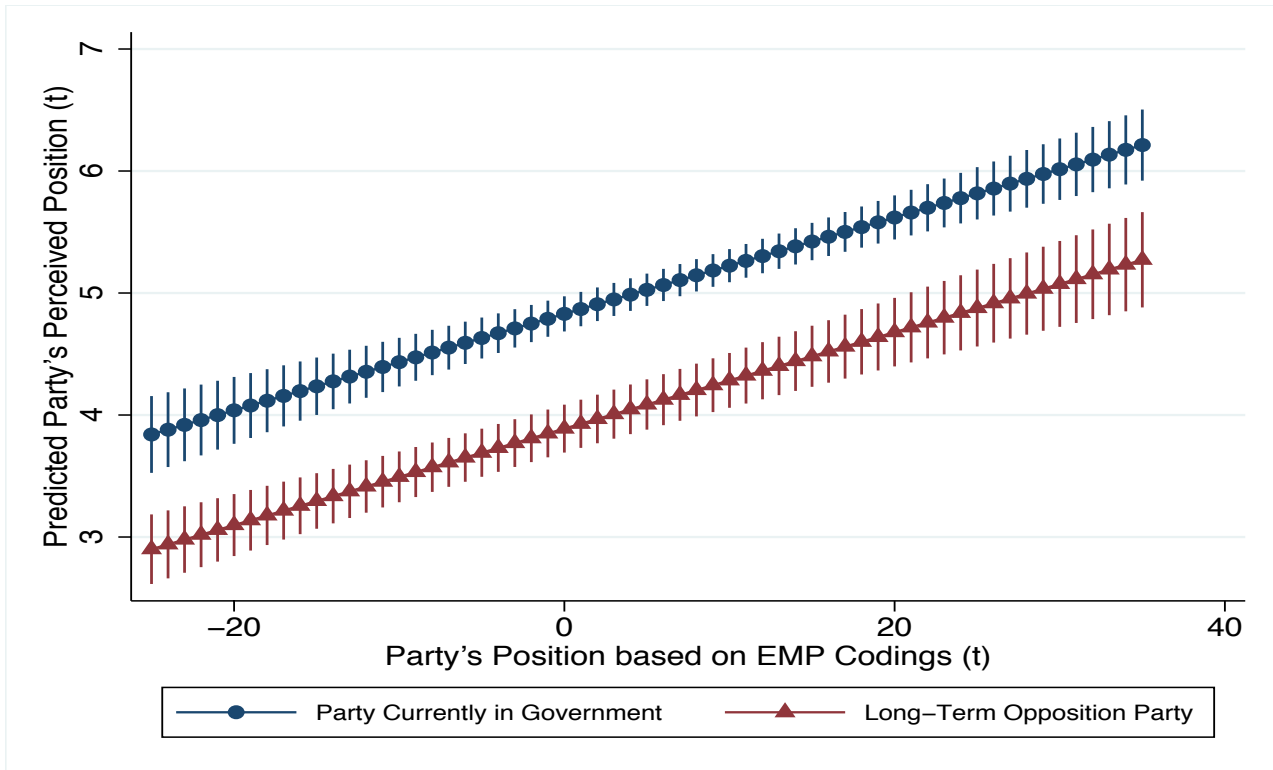
Figure 1 illustrates the influence of parties' governing status and their Euromanifestos, by displaying the predicted effects of the policy tone of their Euromanifestos (the horizontal axis)

on their mean perceived positions on European integration (the vertical axis), for the parameter estimates on the full model reported in column 2 of Table 3. The figure also displays 90% confidence intervals on these predictions, and plots predicted perceived positions for EMP codings ranging from two standard deviations below the mean value in our data set (about -25 on the -100 to +100 scale) to two standard deviations above the mean (about +35 on the scale). The figure displays predicted effects for currently governing parties (the top, blue line in the figure), and a long-term opposition party (the bottom, red line). As expected, parties' predicted perceived positions become more pro-Europe as the policy tones of their Euromanifestos shift in a pro-Europe direction, i.e., as the EMP coding becomes more positive, independently of their governing status. This implies that some segment of the population systematically processes pertinent information about parties' positions as stated in their manifestos. Consistent with our hypotheses about government-related heuristics, we see that – controlling for the tone of the party's Euromanifesto – currently governing parties' predicted policy images are much more pro-Europe than the images of long-term opposition parties. This implies that some citizens apply heuristic reasoning to infer party positions from their governing status, independently of the content of party manifestos. Moreover, citizens' inferences from parties' governing status may over-ride the effects of large differences in their manifestos. Thus a currently governing party whose Euromanifesto is coded at the 25th percentile of the cases in our data set, i.e., whose manifesto is much more Eurosceptic than the median party in our data, is nonetheless predicted to be perceived as distinctly more pro-EU than a long-term opposition party with a pro-Europe EMP coding at the 75th percentile of our data – even though this perception conflicts with exogenous,

manifesto-based measures of these two parties' positions.⁸ Hence while parties' policy images respond to the actual statements in their Euromanifestos, these images are also strongly shaped by the inferences citizens' draw from parties' governing status.

⁸ Specifically, the estimates in column 2 of Table 3 imply that the mean perceived position of a currently governing party whose Euromanifesto is coded at the 25th percentile of the EMP values in our data set (+0.5 on the -100 to +100 EMP scale) will equal $[4.71 + 0.040*(0.5) + 0.12] = 4.85$, while the predicted mean perception of a long-term opposition party whose Euromanifesto is coded at the 75th percentile of the EMP values in our data set (+12.3) will equal $[4.71 + 0.040*(12.3) - 0.84] = 4.91 = 4.32$.

Figure 1. Effects of Parties' Governing Status and their Euromanifestos on Voters' Perceived Party Positions on European Integration



Notes. The figure displays the predicted effect of the [*j's position – EMP codings (t)*] variable on the [*Party j's mean perceived position (t)*] variable, computed for the coefficient estimates reported in column 2 of Table 3 for a currently governing party (the top, blue line) and for a party in long-term opposition (the bottom red line). The figure displays 90% confidence intervals on these predictions.

Analyses using the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys. As discussed above, the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (CHES) provide an alternative party position measure that captures the many factors experts may consider when estimating party positions (i.e., manifestos, party press releases, party leaders' speeches and interviews, parties' legislative behavior, etc.). Accordingly, we estimated models that were identical to equations 1-2 above except that our exogenous measure of the party's position on European integration was the [*j's position – CHES experts (t)*] variable, defined

as the mean position the CHES experts ascribed to the party in the year t of the current CHES survey.⁹ We again controlled for country and year fixed effects:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Party } j\text{'s mean perceived position } (t) = & b_1 + b_2[j\text{'s position} - \text{CHES experts } (t)] \\ & + b_3[j \text{ is currently in government } (t)] \end{aligned} \quad . \quad (3)$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Party } j\text{'s mean perceived position } (t) = & b_1 + b_2[j\text{'s position} - \text{CHES experts } (t)] \\ & + b_3[j \text{ is currently in government } (t)] \\ & + b_4[j \text{ in long-term opposition } (t)] \end{aligned} \quad . \quad (4)$$

Columns 3-4 in Table 3 report the parameter estimates on these models, with standard errors clustered on parties. The EES respondents' party placements strongly track the CHES experts' placements, i.e., the coefficient on the $[j\text{'s position} - \text{CHES experts } (t)]$ variable is positive and

⁹ Note that the CHES surveys are not always contemporaneous with the EES surveys. In particular, while the EES and CHES both conducted surveys in 1999 and 2014, the other CHES surveys were from 2002, 2006, and 2010, while the EES surveys were from 2004 and 2009. To address this issue we calibrated the EES respondents' 2009 party placements against CHES experts' 2010 party placements, while excluding parties whose governing status changed between 2009 and 2010. And we calibrated the EES respondents' party placements from 2004 against the CHES experts' 2002 party placements, while excluding parties whose governing status changed between 2002 and 2004. We conducted additional analyses that were restricted to EES data from 1999 and 2014 – the years for which we have contemporaneous CHES and EES surveys – which supported similar substantive conclusions to those we report below. (*Note to reviewers: we report these analyses in Table S3 of the supplementary information memo.*)

significant ($p < .01$) in both models. This estimate substantiates Bakker et al.'s (2015) finding that rank-and-file voters' perceived party positions on Europe track experts' party placements, implying that some citizens systematically process the same types of information the CHES experts presumably consider. Moreover, our estimates on the [*j is currently in government (t)*] variable and [*j in long-term opposition (t)*] variable continue to support the current government hypothesis (H1) that citizens perceive currently governing parties as more pro-Europe than opposition parties, and the long-term opposition hypothesis (H2) that citizens perceive long-term opposition parties as more Eurosceptic than opposition parties with previous governing experience. The coefficient on the [*j is currently in government (t)*] variable is 0.22 ($p < .01$) for the basic model, which supports H1, and the coefficient on the [*j in long-term opposition (t)*] variable is -0.50 ($p < .01$) for the full model, which supports H2. The latter estimate again implies that citizens cue especially strongly off of parties' long-term opposition status to infer Euroscepticism.

Finally, note that our estimates imply that rank-and-file voters rely more heavily on government-based heuristics than do political experts. To see this, note that if experts and rank-and-file voters attached equal weight to these heuristics, we would expect to estimate insignificant effects of parties' governing status on voters' party placements, when controlling for experts' party placements. However we estimate significant governing party effects on voter perceptions when controlling for expert perceptions, which implies that rank-and-file voters cue more strongly off of parties' governing status. This makes intuitive sense: unlike many citizens, political experts have extensive stores of information they can systematically process as they estimate party positions, and hence have less need to rely on the information shortcut of parties' governing history.

Table 3. Analyses of Voter Perceptions of Party Positions on European Integration

	<u>EMP codings</u>			<u>CHES surveys</u>	
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Basic Model (1)	Full Model (2)		Basic Model (3)	Full Model (4)
<i>Party j's position – EMP codings (t)</i>	.048** (.005)	.040** (.006)			
<i>Party j's position – CHES survey (t)</i>				.49** (.03)	.44** (.04)
<i>Party j in government (t)</i>	.45** (.10)	.12 (.10)		.22** (.08)	.09 (.09)
<i>Party j in long-term opposition (t)</i>		-.84** (.15)			-.40** (.14)
<i>Intercept</i>	4.26** (0.24)	4.71** (0.41)		2.11** (0.25)	2.53** (0.38)
<i>Country dummies</i>	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
<i>Year dummies</i>	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
<i>N</i>	420	420		420	420
<i>R²</i>	.45	.51		.59	.60

** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$, two-tailed tests.

Notes. The dependent variable for these analyses was [*Party j's mean perceived position (t)*], defined as the mean European Election Study (EES) respondent party placement on European integration in the year t of the current election survey, for the EES surveys administered in 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014. The top number in each cell is the unstandardized coefficient, the number in parentheses below that is the standard error on this estimate. The dependent variables are defined in the text. These models were estimated with standard errors clustered on parties.

Additional robustness checks. (*Note to reviewers: We present the analyses described in this paragraph in Section 3 of the supplementary information memo appended at the end of this paper.*) We estimated additional models to evaluate whether the causal processes we identify differ across time periods.¹⁰ In particular, the increasing salience of European integration issues (e.g.,

¹⁰ We thank three anonymous reviewers for suggesting the robustness checks we report here.

Hooghe and Marks 2018) may be reflected in higher levels of relevant knowledge among the respondents in more recent EES surveys, thereby reducing their reliance on government-related heuristics. In fact, we estimate that EES survey respondents cued more strongly off of parties' long-term opposition status in 1999 than in the subsequent elections surveys (2004, 2009, 2014), but that the impact of long-term opposition status remained large and significant across all of our survey years. Next, we estimated models to evaluate whether the heuristics we identify operate differently with respect to Prime Ministerial parties, compared to their junior coalition partners. This issue is important because some populist radical right parties have recently entered government for the first time as junior coalition partners in Austria, Greece, Italy and Switzerland, so that it is interesting to evaluate the implications of government participation for their policy images (e.g., Bale 2003; de Lange 2012; Mudde 2013). We also estimated models that controlled for interactive effects between parties' governing status and the policy tones of their Euromanifestos, reasoning that citizens might discount governing parties' manifestos, and instead place governing parties based on their concrete policy outputs. We detected no meaningful differences in causal processes across time or for Prime Ministerial (PM) parties versus junior coalition partners (although there is suggestive evidence that citizens may apply the government heuristics (slightly) more strongly to PM parties), nor did we estimate significant differences in citizens' reactions to opposition versus governing parties' manifestos. (In this regard, we also estimated lowess fit lines relating parties' perceived positions to our exogenous party position measures, which provided suggestive evidence that citizens may cue less strongly off of long-term opposition parties' Euromanifestos when these manifestos are more Eurosceptic.) We re-estimated our models separately on post-communist democracies, for which causal processes might differ; we re-estimated our models omitting one country at a time to see whether our results were driven by

a particular country; and we re-estimated our models separately on the data from each EES survey year (1999, 2004, 2009, 2014). These analyses all continued to support our hypotheses.

Finally, in order to make use of over-time, within party variation in governing status we estimated models of the effects on voter perceptions of long-term opposition parties enter government. These analyses were on a much smaller set of cases than our time-series cross-section analyses, so that our estimates were far less precise than those we reported above; yet these over-time analyses provided suggestive evidence that the perceptual effects of long-term opposition parties entering government may be even larger than those we report in this paper.

The Consequences of the Governing Party Heuristic for Citizens' Party Support and their Policy beliefs: Analyses of Mass-Elite Policy Linkages

While we find that citizens infer party positions from their governing status, these inferences arguably only matter if they have *electoral implications*, i.e., if they influence citizens' own policy views and/or their party support. In analyses of panel survey data we might parse out these alternative effects, i.e., how much citizens' perceived party positions influence citizens' own policy beliefs versus their party support.¹¹ However, because the data we analyze is time-series cross-sectional, we instead estimate the extent to which *either* process occurs. To evaluate this issue we analyze the dyadic correspondence (Dalton 1985) between parties' policy images and their supporters' views, i.e., whether citizens who support parties with more pro-Europe images tend to be more pro-Europe themselves. Our logic is simple: to the extent that we detect such dyadic correspondence, this will imply that citizens' perceived party positions influence their

¹¹ Panel surveys enhance scholars' abilities to parse out how citizens' perceptions of party policy positions prompt subsequent shifts in their own policy beliefs and/or shifts in their party support. For such analyses see Dancey and Goren (2010) and Milazzo et al. (2011).

party support and/or their policy beliefs.¹² This test is incomplete since it does not parse out whether this dyadic correspondence reflects citizens updating their own policy views as opposed to their party support. However it allows us to estimate how citizens' application of the governing heuristics jointly influences their policy views and party support.

We initially specify a simple regression model to analyze dyadic correspondence on European integration. Our measure of the position of each party's partisan constituency is the mean self-placement of all European Election Study (EES) respondents in the election survey at time t who supported the focal party. (Section 2 in the supplementary information memo presents the partisanship question from the EES surveys.¹³) Our dependent variable, [*Party j supporters' mean position (t)*], is the mean position of party j 's supporters in the current EES survey, based on their self-placements on the 0-10 European integration scale. Our independent variables are party j 's mean perceived position, defined above, and [*mean position – all EES respondents (t)*], defined as the mean self-placement of all EES respondents from the focal country at time t . We include the latter variable because we might expect that if public opinion in a country is more pro-Europe for reasons unrelated to parties' positions, then the views of a party's supporters will

¹² That is, such a pattern conforms with a policy-based voting process whereby citizens with pro-Europe views tend to support parties with pro-Europe policy images (Ray 2003a), and also to policy cueing whereby the party's perceived policy position prompts its pre-existing supporters to become more pro-Europe themselves (Gabel 1998; Ray 2003b; Steenbergen et al. 2007).

¹³ We note that we could not include the 2014 EES data in these analyses because the party identification question was not included in the follow-up module that included the respondents' self-placements on the European integration scale.

also be more pro-Europe. We estimated the parameters of the following dyadic correspondence model on the set of all parties with at least 20 supporters in the current wave of the EES survey.¹⁴

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Party } j \text{'s supporters' mean position } (t) = & b_1 + b_2[\text{Party } j \text{'s mean perceived position } (t)] \\ & + b_3[\text{mean position} - \text{all EES respondents } (t)] \quad . \quad (5) \end{aligned}$$

Column 1 in Table 4 reports the parameter estimates for this specification. The coefficient on the variable [*mean position – all EES respondents (t)*] is small and insignificant, denoting that – controlling for parties’ policy images – the views of a party’s partisan constituency are not strongly related to overall public opinion. Moreover the coefficient on the variable [*Party j’s mean perceived position (t)*], +0.88, is significant ($p < .01$) and denotes that a one-unit shift in a party’s mean perceived position along the 0-10 European integration scale is associated with an 0.88-unit shift in its supporters’ mean position along the same scale, in the same direction. This strong evidence of dyadic correspondence implies that parties’ perceived policy positions influence citizens’ party support and/or their policy views. This implies in turn that citizens’ applications of the governing heuristics – which we have shown strongly influence their perceived party positions – have consequences for citizens’ party support and/or their policy beliefs.

To further substantiate this conclusion we estimated the parameters of additional models that controlled for exogenous party position measures, namely the EMP codings of party Euromanifestos and the CHES experts’ party placements. We controlled for these exogenous measures to evaluate the possibility that dyadic mass-elite correspondence is due to indirect ef-

¹⁴ We analyzed parties with at least 20 EES supporters to minimize the sampling-based error in our measure of the partisan constituency’s position. We conducted robustness checks with alternative cut-offs, which support identical substantive conclusions to those we report below.

fects pertaining to the political cues citizens may take from organizations and interest groups that react to parties' positions. Suppose, for instance, that unionized workers in occupations facing employment competition from immigrants take political cues from their trade unions, and that these unions promote Eurosceptic policies and also support parties that advance objectively Eurosceptic positions. Then we might expect cue-taking union members to hold more Eurosceptic views and to support more Eurosceptic parties, independently of their own perceived party positions. However we find no evidence that mass-elite correspondence is mediated by exogenous party position measures. We estimate small and insignificant coefficients on the EMP codings of party Euromanifestos (column 2 in Table 4) and on the CHES experts' party placements (column 3), while we again detect strong correspondence between parties' perceived positions and their supporters' views. These findings substantiate that the heuristics we identify influence citizens' party support and/or their policy views via their effects on citizens' perceived party positions.

Table 4. Analyses of Dyadic Correspondence between Parties' Mean Perceived Positions and their Supporters' Positions

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Basic Model (1)	EMP Model (2)	CHES Model (3)
<i>Mean position – all EES respondents (t)</i>	0.05 (0.15)	0.07 (0.15)	0.05 (0.15)
<i>Party j's mean perceived position (t)</i>	0.88** (0.03)	0.86** (0.04)	0.84** (0.06)
<i>Party j's position – EMP codings (t)</i>		0.003 (0.005)	
<i>Party j's position – CHES survey (t)</i>			0.04 (0.05)
<i>Intercept</i>	1.06 (0.73)	1.07 (0.73)	1.09 (0.73)

<i>Country dummies</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Year dummies</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>N</i>	211	211	211
<i>R</i> ²	.85	.85	.85

** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$, two-tailed tests.

Notes. The dependent variable for these analyses was [*Party j's supporters' mean position (t)*], defined as the mean European Election Study (EES) respondent self-placement on European integration in the year t of the current election survey, averaged over all respondents who reported that they supported party j . We analyzed all parties with at least 20 supporters in the current wave of the EES survey. The top number in each cell is the unstandardized coefficient, the number in parentheses is the standard error on this estimate. The dependent variables are defined in the text. These models were estimated with standard errors clustered on parties.

Conclusion and Discussion

Fortunato and Stevenson's (2013) finding that citizens infer party Left-Right positions from governing coalition arrangements has implications for mass-elite linkages and for parties' electoral strategies. The finding illuminates how citizens use the simple coalition heuristic to infer parties' relative policy positions, which alleviates the need to rely exclusively on the more nuanced informational cues contained in party manifestos and press releases, party elites' speeches and interviews, and parties' legislative behavior.

We argue for even simpler government-related heuristics citizens can apply to infer party positions on the increasingly salient European integration issue: namely, that currently governing parties are more pro-Europe than are opposition parties (the current government heuristic), and that long-term opposition parties are more Eurosceptic than opposition parties with previous governing experience (the long-term opposition heuristic). These heuristics are simple to apply, since citizens need only know which parties are currently in government and recall which parties

have previous governing experience. We analyze exogenous party position measures based on Euromanifesto codings and experts' party placements, which show that both heuristics have a sound empirical basis; in particular, long-term opposition parties appear far more Eurosceptic (on average) than other parties. We then analyze survey respondents' party placements in 24 countries from the 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014 European Election Studies, that substantiate that citizens apply both heuristics to infer party positions, and that citizens cue especially strongly off parties' status in long-term opposition. We also find that citizens' party placements are strongly related to exogenous party position measures derived from manifesto codings and political experts, i.e., citizens apply the government heuristics we identify but also weigh the more nuanced information parties convey via manifestos and other venues. However we estimate that citizens cue so strongly off parties' governing status that they will tend to perceive long-term opposition parties as much more Eurosceptic than currently governing parties, even when a comparison of exogenous party position measures (based on party manifestos or experts' party placements) suggests the reverse. In supplementary analyses we show that these effects obtain in both post-communist and established democracies; that they apply to both Prime Ministerial parties and to junior coalition partners; that they obtain before and after the recent global economic crisis; and, that they are not driven by the data patterns from any single country or from any single survey year in our data set. Finally, we show that the government heuristics citizens apply have electoral consequences, because their effects on voters' party perceptions in turn shape citizens' party support and their policy views.

Our study comes with caveats that raise questions for future research. First, the fact that citizens apply government-related heuristics does not imply that parties' policy images are held hostage to their governing status, for we find that citizens also respond to exogenous measures of

party positions such as election manifestos. Thus governing parties may work to counteract the pro-Europe inferences citizens draw from their cabinet participation by communicating Eurosceptic messages via their manifestos, speeches, press releases, and so on. However, our analyses suggest that it requires extremely Eurosceptic communications to counteract the pro-Europe inference citizens draw when a party enters government for the first time. It would be interesting to study whether governing party elites at times employ such strategies, especially populist Eurosceptic parties that join coalition governments as junior partners. Because these parties' electoral appeal plausibly rests on their status as outsider, anti-EU (and anti-immigration) parties, they may be especially concerned to counter the pro-EU impression their cabinet participation conveys. Second, and related, it would be interesting to analyze whether these radical right parties' entry into parliament alters their policy images, i.e., whether citizens cue off of parties' parliamentary presence in addition to their governing status (e.g., Bischof and Wagner 2019).

Finally, our findings raise the normative question: Do citizens' applications of the government heuristics we identify actually enhance their perceptual accuracy, i.e., do these heuristics help citizens to "get it right"? This issue is complex because it involves comparing citizens' perceived party positions against the party's "actual" or "objective" position – yet reasonable people may disagree about exactly what the party's position is. In this regard, we note that the two exogenous party position measures we have analyzed here, based on the codings of party Euromanifestos and experts' party placements, do not correlate perfectly (the correlation is about 0.8: see Adams et al. 2019), and moreover there is a wide-ranging, often heated debate over each measure's validity (see, e.g., Bakker et al. 2015; Benoit et al. 2009). It is beyond our scope here to adjudicate this debate, and we therefore hesitate to assess whether citizens' perceived party positions are 'objectively' accurate, or whether citizens' application of the government heuristic en-

hances their perceptual accuracy – in which case such heuristics might be classified as valid information shortcuts – or whether they are a form of perceptual bias that systematically distorts perceptions (see, e.g., Hobolt and Tilley 2014). This too is an important topic for future research.

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